

## Chipper program is in full swing

By Trevor Warner , Paradise Post

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Rob Mahon (left) and Josh Carter from Sierra Tree Care toss branches into a chipper Thursday as part of Butte County Fire Safe Council's annual chipper program. The programs help residents clear their yards of debris at no cost to the resident. Trevor Warner - Paradise Post

It's chipper season in Butte County and local residents are already taking advantage of the free program.

Josh Carter and Rob Mahon from Sierra Tree Care were at Tucker Brandt's place off Neal Road Thursday afternoon turning branch piles into mulch.

Brandt said he bought a foreclosed home about two and a half years ago and the land was overgrown with vegetation.

He wasn't sure what he was going to do with it until a friend who works for Cal Fire suggested the chipper program.

The crews came out and did their thing, leaving a nice, open piece of property for Brandt, who was impressed enough with the work that he asked them back for year two.

"I'm a little amazed they're doing it for free," Brandt said Thursday as the Sierra Tree Care crew readied their chipper machine. "It would've cost quite a bit for me to have it hauled away."

The program is made possible through grants from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service though the California Fire Safe Council, said Valerie Glass, Assistant Director of the Butte County Fire Safe Council.

The program runs seasonally from about November through May.

"We're trying to get everybody done before fire season," she said.

This is the 13th year the program has been in existence and it is available to anyone that needs it, Glass said.

The program takes care of sticks, branches and brush. Vegetation such as pine needles or scotch broom will not work in the chipper, however.

One thing to remember is that the tree crews will only mulch the product, it is up to the home owner to remove the mulch.

The good news is that the mulch can be used around the yard and in gardens as ground cover.

The Butte County Fire Safe Council's Chuck Marshall said the Forest Ranch school comes in after the tree

crews to collect chipper mulch to be spread around the playground. The chips also help keep weeds down and can be spread around muddy areas to absorb water, Marshall said.

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He said some people are concerned about the potential fire hazard of using the wood chips around the yard.

He said the chips will smolder and there might be some small flames, but it can easily be handled by the fire department or even a home owner with a garden hose.

Still, he advised keeping the chips in areas away from the home.

Brandt said he plans on growing a garden and will use the chips from this latest batch to help develop the garden.

Brandt's final word on the matter was a big "thank you" to those who made the chipper program possible.

It saved him a lot of time and money, he said.

Those who want to utilize the program just need to call the Butte County Fire Safe Council at 877-0984.

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